Journal of Tourism, Hospitality and Sports
ISSN (Paper) 2312-5187 ISSN (Online) 2312-5179 An International Peer-reviewed Journal
Vol.70, 2026

Factors Influencing Competitiveness of Tourism Destinations: Case of Bale and East Bale Zone

Yibrie, Sofya Tsegaye Department of Tourism and Hotel Management, *Jimma University, Ethiopia*

Adem, Amana Omer Department of Tourism and Hotel Management, Madda Walabu Unvirstity, Ethiopia

Abstract

Tourism destinations face intense competition in attracting visitors and maintaining their market share. To ensure sustainable growth, it is crucial to examine and enhance their competitiveness. This study was aim to examine tourism destination competitiveness in the case of Bale and East Bale zone. A mixed research approach with a mainly explanatory and descriptive design was employ to achieve its objectives. From non-probability, sampling convenience and purposive sampling technique was employed to select key respondents of the study. While stakeholders were, select for interviewees by using purposive sampling technique. A total 385 samples was draw from tourist come to visit East Bale and Bale zone. Self-administered questionnaires and interviews from primary data sources, and reports, an extensive review of related literature from journal articles, books and published and unpublished thesis from secondary data sources would be employ to collect data for this study. Data was analyzed with descriptive statistics to analyze the status of tourism destination competitiveness, and Sam- structural equation model analysis would be employ to identify the factors affecting tourism destination competitiveness SPSS version 26. Data was present by the use of tables, graphs, pie charts with mean, frequency and percentage in the due course of this study. Qualitative data would be analyze using thematic analysis based on the objectives of the study

Keywords: Destination; competitiveness; Tourism; Tourist; factors

DOI: 10.7176/JTHS/70-03

Publication date: June 30th 2026

Introduction

Tourism destination competitiveness refers to the ability of a destination to attract and satisfy tourists while ensuring sustainable economic, social, and environmental outcomes. It is a multifaceted concept that encompasses various factors, including accessibility, quality of services, attractions, and marketing strategies (Dwyer & Kim, 2003).

Tourism is a crucial sector for economic development, particularly in developing countries where it serves as a significant source of employment and foreign exchange. Ethiopia, with its rich cultural heritage, diverse landscapes, and unique wildlife, holds considerable potential for tourism growth. Among its various regions, Bale and East Bale Zones stand out due to their stunning natural parks, endemic species, and cultural diversity. The Bale Mountains National Park, for instance, is renowned for its biodiversity and attracts nature enthusiasts and adventure seekers alike (Mulugeta & Aklilu, 2019).

Despite the potential, the tourism industry in these zones faces challenges that hinder competitiveness. Factors such as inadequate infrastructure, limited marketing efforts, and insufficient stakeholder collaboration can impede the growth of tourism in these areas (Wondimu & Daba, 2020). Understanding the dynamics that influence tourism competitiveness is essential for stakeholders, including local governments, businesses, and communities, to develop strategies that can enhance the appeal of these destinations.

The concept of tourism destination competitiveness has been widely studied in various contexts. Dwyer and Kim (2003) defined it as the ability of a destination to attract tourists while providing them with satisfactory experiences. This involves a complex interplay of factors such as accessibility, amenities, attractions, and marketing strategies. Despite the potential for tourism development in Bale and East Bale Zones, there is a lack of comprehensive understanding regarding the factors that influence their competitiveness as tourist destinations.

This study aims to fill this gap by investigating the factors influencing the competitiveness of tourism destinations specifically in Bale and East Bale Zones.

General Objective

The general objective of this study was to assess the Factors Influencing Competitiveness of Tourism Destinations; In Case of Bale and East Bale Zone Specific Objectives

Specific Objective

- To examine destination resources as the factors of destination competitiveness
- To examine the destination support services the factors of destination competitiveness
- To analyze the human related factors as the factors of destination competitiveness

Research Hypothesis

Based on the research objectives and theoretical framework, the following important hypotheses are generated for this study:

H1: Tourist attraction significantly and positively affects destination competitiveness
H2: destination management directly and positively influences destination competitiveness
H3: Price directly and positively influences destination competitiveness
H4: Accessibility and Infrastructure significantly and positively affects influences destination competitiveness
H5: Tour guides performance significantly and positively influences destination competitiveness
H6: safety and security significantly and positively affects influences destination competitiveness
H7: sustainability Practice significantly and positively affects influences destination competitiveness

LITERATURE REVIEW

Overview of tourism destination competitiveness

TDC is among the introductory fundamentals in the tourism industry. The use of the term competitiveness in the field of tourism was coined in the early 1980s from an interdisciplinary economics perspective. Crouch and Ritchie (1999) defined TDC as tourism destinations and their power to boost tourism outflow and attract visitors while giving them exhilarating, unforgettable experiences while making a considerable profit. A brief literature review indicates that destination competitiveness forms a significant part of tourism literature and is a major concern for destination management organizations (DMOs) and policymakers. A synthesis of previous literature categorized TDC models into two primary internal sources that influence destination competitiveness: internal management and destination resources. Since then, the main goal to comprehend, enhance and maintain TDC has gotten considerable attention from governments, field experts and scholars (Enright and Newton, 2004).

Factors influencing destination competitiveness

The examination of the factors that influence destination competitiveness (see e.g. Ritchie and Crouch, 2000; Enright and Newton. 2004; Dwyer and Kim, 2003) reveals three clearly identifiable groups of factors: destination resources, destination support services; and human related factors. .

Destination Resources (DR)

Destination resources are all the assets that a destination possesses and are available to destination firms in order to utilize them in a specific economic activity. Destination resources are the core resources on which tourism at a destination is based. Melian-Gonzalez and Garcia-Falcon (2003), define destination resources as destination strategic assets which determine the level of activity a destination can achieve. The availability of resources within a destination is important for its performance; destination resources enhance its competitiveness by attracting entrepreneurs who invest in facilities and thus enable the destination to attract tourists.

Dwyer and Kim (2002b) distinguish between inherited and created resources. Inherited resources are divided into natural (e.g. physiography, climate, flora and fauna) and cultural and heritage resources (e.g. the culture and heritage of a destination, its history, institutions, customs and architectural features, cuisine, traditions artwork music and handicraft). Natural resources are crucial for many forms of tourism and visitor satisfaction (Buckley, 1994). Cultural and heritage resources are powerful forces attracting visitors

(Murphy et al., 2000). On the other hand, created resources are built (e.g., tourism infrastructure, special events, activities, entertainment, shopping) (Murphy, Pritchard, & Smith, 2000); they are important in determining destination competitiveness. According to Crouch et al (2000), the more attractive created resources the more diversified a destination's portfolio is of tourism resources, services and experiences, and the greater is destination competitiveness. Without these resources tourism destination cannot develop. This study investigates the tourist business operators' view of the importance of destination resources to its competitiveness.

Destination Support Services (DSS)

Destination support services include the entire infrastructure that is made up of the a) general infrastructure (normal infrastructure), such as roads, airports, train and public and private transport system, telecommunication, healthy care facilities, sanitation, electricity generation system, sewerage treatment, water supply, financial services, and technology (Prideaux & Cooper, 2002); and b) specific tourism infrastructure (superstructure) developed specifically for the use by tourists, such as resorts, hotels, or roads in national parks (Ritchie & Crouch, 2000), food outlets, travel agents, car rental firms, or local convention bureaux. There is also service infrastructure that includes shopping facilities, food storages, garages, pharmacies, bookstores, hairdressers, and administrative offices that provide services to both locals and tourists. The ability of a destination to compete is enhanced by the provision of infrastructure. Inadequate infrastructure results in less capacity to serve tourists and low destination patronage.

Destination support services that are usually examined are accommodation and communication facilities, transportation services, destination utilities such as health care services and facilities, marketing and promotion, and cooperation within the destination. A destination's location (accessibility) relative to major source markets represents a "value-added" and can have a major impact on the destination's competitiveness. According to McKercher (1998), more proximate destinations exhibit a competitive advantage over destinations that offer a similar product but are more distant.

Human Resources (HR)

The availability and quality of human capital (its hospitality, knowledge and education and research institutions) influences destination development and its success. The adequately and professionally trained human resources are a very valuable source of competitive advantage (Baum, 1994a; Conlin & Titcombe, 1995; Olesen & Schettini, 1994). Well-trained personnel are required in all service establishments within destinations (Briguglio and Vella 1995). The quality of the tourism employees' performance contributes to the success and competitiveness of a destination (Baum, 1993; Jafari & Fayos-Sola, 1995).

Methods

Research Design and Approach

The study was employed descriptive and explanatory research design. Descriptive research design is used to describe the data and characteristics about the population or phenomenon being studied, in the form of table and frequency statistics. Explanatory study clarifies the relationship between two aspects of a situation or phenomena (Kumar, 2011). This research design is considered as appropriate because it is suitable in providing a description of the influencing factors on tourism destination competitiveness. In addition, the study combined both qualitative and quantitative approaches for the sake of understanding the influencing factor on tourism destination competitiveness.

Type and Source of Data

Both quantitative and qualitative data types were used by the research team. The qualitative and quantitative data is gathered through primary and secondary data sources.

Sample Size Determination

According to (Dawson, 2009), the correct sample size in a study is dependent on the nature of the population and the purpose of the study. Although, there are no general rules, the sample size usually depends on the population to be sampled. A number of research conduct a study through targeting domestic tourists some are possible to find documented material for tourist statistic and arrival the other ones were predicate the arrival number and also the remaining was not possible to find a concrete total visitor arrival on their study setting. However, in this

study it is not possible to find a concrete total number of tourist arrival in Bale and East Bale Zone research setting. In other words, the researcher cannot get tangible statistical data about the target population. Therefore, neither predicted the population nor catch documented evidence due to unavailability of data. With regard to this support to visit Both Zones and its tourist destination making the study population is infinite. In order to convince and make it this statement logical, empirical evidence. Since it was not possible to find a concrete total visitor arrival population, the researchers relied on Cochran's (1977) formula for calculating sample size when the population is infinite. In the current study, the researchers cannot predetermine the total number of tourists who are supposed to Bale and East Bale zone making the study population infinite (Cochran, 1977). Accordingly, the formula $n0 = (Z^2 pq / e^2$,

Where, - n0 is the required sample size,

-z is the selected critical value of desired confidence level,

- p is the estimated proportion of an attribute that is present in the population, q = 1 – p and
-e is the desired level of precision is employed to determine the number of survey respondents. Therefore, assuming a maximum variability, which is equal to 50% (p = 0.5) and taking a 95% confidence level with ± 5% precision, the sample size is calculated as follows.

$n0 = Z^2pq/e^2$ $(1.96)^2 (0.5) (0.5) / (0.05)^2$ =384 tourists

Accordingly, the total number of sample size who fills the questionnaire was 367 out of 384.

Sample size calculated for different confidence level and precision

Method of Data Analysis

Structural equation modeling using AMOS version 23.0 was employed for data analysis. (SEM) model applied to test the conceptual model and examine the relationships between each pairs of variables as suggested in the hypothesis. Structural equation modeling (SEM) refers to a statistical method used to measure and analyze the relationship of observed and latent variables. It is similar but more powerful than regression analyses; it examines linear causal relationship among variables, while simultaneously accounting for measurement error (Tanya and Claudio, 2010).

Path analysis, on the other hand, had its beginning in biometrics and aimed to find the causal relationship among variables by creating a path diagram (Wright, 1918; 1920, 1921 as cited in Fan et al., 2016). It was the early name for SEM before there were latent variables, and was very powerful in testing and developing the structural hypothesis with both indirect and direct causal effects. Path analysis can explain the causal relationships among variables. A common function of path analysis is mediation, which assumes that a variable can influence an outcome directly and indirectly through another variable (Shao et al., 2016) Path analysis developed to quantify the relationships among multiple variables (Wright, 1921 as cited in Fan et al., 2016). Therefore, in this study the structural equation modeling of path analysis was employed to test the effect of each of the determinant factors on agricultural input and output marketing through testing the formulated hypotheses. The questionnaires were collected manually from the sample respondents and the responses was coded and entered into the statistical software (Statistical Package for Social Scientists (SPSS)) Version 26 to make a clear recording of data. The statistical software was helped to analyze and present the data through the statistical tools that includes descriptive analysis (frequencies, mean, standard deviation and percentages).

Model Specification

The Descriptive statistics was used to analysis demographic profile of population and general information by using SPSS V26.0 statistical tools. Frequencies and percentages were used to analyze demographic and general information of the respondents.

In order to examine the effect and relationship between agricultural cooperatives and agricultural input-output marketing the explanatory variables, structural equation model (SEM) is used. The path analysis takes place using SPSS and AMOS. The data imported from SPSS to AMOS for testing each hypothesis and research objectives. The model was adopted from different studies conducted on the topic area.

Results

The analysis starts with presenting the correlation between variables in the model. The result of the correlation

coefficients indicates how strong or weak the relationship is between variables concerned. Then the inferential statistics presents the structural equation modeling results obtained from the Amos 23 outputs. These data describe the casual relations between and among the exogenous variable, and the endogenous variables.

Normality of data and multivariate analysis

In structural equation modeling, the most important assumption is testing normality and multivariate analysis. Therefore, the researcher has employed structural equation model, path analyses to check the normality of the data collected. To begin with, the analytical way of normality test, decretive statistics were produced. Swekness and kurtosis were used to determine whether a data set is normally distributed or not and to judge the normality of the data. Though, normally distributed has both Swekness and kurtosis value between -2 to +2 is accepted (George & Mallery, 2010). It can be noted from and seen table 4.5, that value of Swekness and kurtosis fall within the acceptable range of -2 to +2 and it indicate that the data is fairly normal and the basic the assumption normality testing is fulfilled.

Multivariate analysis is a process of involving multiple dependent variables resulting in one outcome. MVA is a statistical procedure for analysis of data involving more than one type of measurement or observation and it may mean solving problems where more than one dependent variable is analyzed simultaneously with other variables. According to the rule of thumb, the range of acceptance for multivariate analysis is between -1.96 to 1.96 (GLT, 2020). So as the below result indicated that the result is found between the range of acceptance and it is accepted.

Table 1. Assessment of normality and multivariate results

Variables	min	Max	Skew	c.r.	kurtosis	c.r.
Tourist attraction	6.000	30.000	-.373	-2.718	-1.144	-4.164
Destination management	8.000	26.000	-.703	-5.121	-.503	-1.829
Destination price	7.000	28.000	-.932	-6.785	.766	2.787
Accessibility and Infrastructure	8.000	40.000	-.964	-7.016	.009	.032
Tour guides Performance	6.000	24.000	-.423	-3.082	-.916	-3.335
Safety and security	5.000	25.000	-1.012	-7.368	.013	.047
Sustainability practice	6.000	26.000	-.485	-3.528	-1.410	-5.132
Destination competitiveness	7.000	30.000	-.454	-3.305	-1.391	-5.062
Multivariate					**1.786**	**1.225**

Source: own survey, 2023

Model fit indexes

Table 4.7 provides a summary of the key measures of fit for each of the constructs in the model estimated by Maximum Likelihood Estimates. Hair et al. (2010) suggest that researchers should provide a minimum of "one absolute fit index and one incremental fit index and that three to five fit indexes provide adequate evidence of model fit. Furthermore, Kline (1998) also suggests the inclusion of a fit index that adjusts the explained variance for the model's degree of complexity.

Accordingly, it's possible to use three to four fit indexes as mentioned by the above authors, however the researcher used six fit indexes including the suggested incremental fit index (IFI), absolute fit index (CFI), and root mean square error residual (RMSEA), goodness of fit indexes (GFI), and absolute fit indexes (AGFI). Hence, this model is fit for the analysis as indicated on the table below. The hypothesized relationships were tested using SEM AMOS V23 on SPSS v26. According to Yuan (2005), fit indices are classified based on their distributional assumptions. For instance in convenience we classify fit indices in for categories as follows: first, independent model based; secondly, root mean error square root of approximation; thirdly, residual based and lastly; information criterion based fit indices.

CMIN/DF is a parsimonious conformity index that measures the goodness of fit of the model with the estimated coefficients to achieve conformity. The result of CMIN/DF in this study is 2.602, indicating that the research model fits from the threshold of less than 3 (Marsh et al., 1988).

The Goodness of Fit Index (GFI) shows the overall level of conformity calculated from the residual square of the model predicted compared to the actual data. The GFI value in this model is 0.994. The approximate

value with the recommended level is higher than 0.90 (Mulaik et al 1989).
RMSEA is an index used to compensate for the chi-square value in a large sample. The RMSEA value of this study was 0.066 with the recommended value of <0.08, showing the fit research model (Browne & Cudeck 1993).
AGFI is GFI, which is adjusted to the ratio between the degree of freedom that is proposed and the degree of freedom from the null model. The AGFI value in this model is 0.944. The approximate value with the recommended level should be higher than 0.9, indicating the fit of the research model (Mulaik et al 1989).
The CFI value in this study is 0.998, with a recommended value higher than 0.9 indicating a fit research model (Bentler, 1992). The NFI value in this study is 0.998, with a recommended value higher than 0.9 indicating a fit research model (Bentler, 1992). The IFI value in this study is 0.999, with a recommended value higher than 0.9 indicating a fit research model (Hu and Bentler 1999). All values meet the criterion of preferable values. The hypothesized relationships were tested using SEM AMOS V23 on Spss v26. Overall, the fit indices indicated that the proposed structural model fits the data reasonably well. All values meet the criterion of preferable values. Therefore, the model is found to be fitted for goodness and hence the analysis was done accordingly.

Table 2. Model goodness fitting test

Model Goodness Fitting	Recommended Value	Research Model	Model
CMIN/DF	3	.105	Fit
GFI	>0.9	1.00	Fit
AGFI	>0.9	0.997	Fit
RMSEA	<0.08	0.066	Fit
NFI	>0.9	1.00	Fit
CFI	>0.9	1.00	Fit
IFI	>0.9	1.00	Fit

Source own survey, 2023

Maximum Likelihood Estimates
Maximum likelihood estimation (MLE) is by far the most common method and literatures recommend that unless the researcher has good reason, this default should be taken. MLE makes estimation based on maximizing the probability (likelihood) that the observed covariance are drawn from a population assumed to be the same as that reflected in the coefficient estimates. That is, MLE picks estimates, which have the greatest chance of reproducing the observed data. In connection to this, the following regression estimates were obtained from my analysis.
Modification indexes (MI) may be used to add arrows to the model. The larger the modification indexes, the more arrows will be added to the model, which will improve the model fit (Nora, 2004). Therefore, the researcher used modification indices to get good fitness indexes though adding the both sharpen arrows. (see figure 4.1)

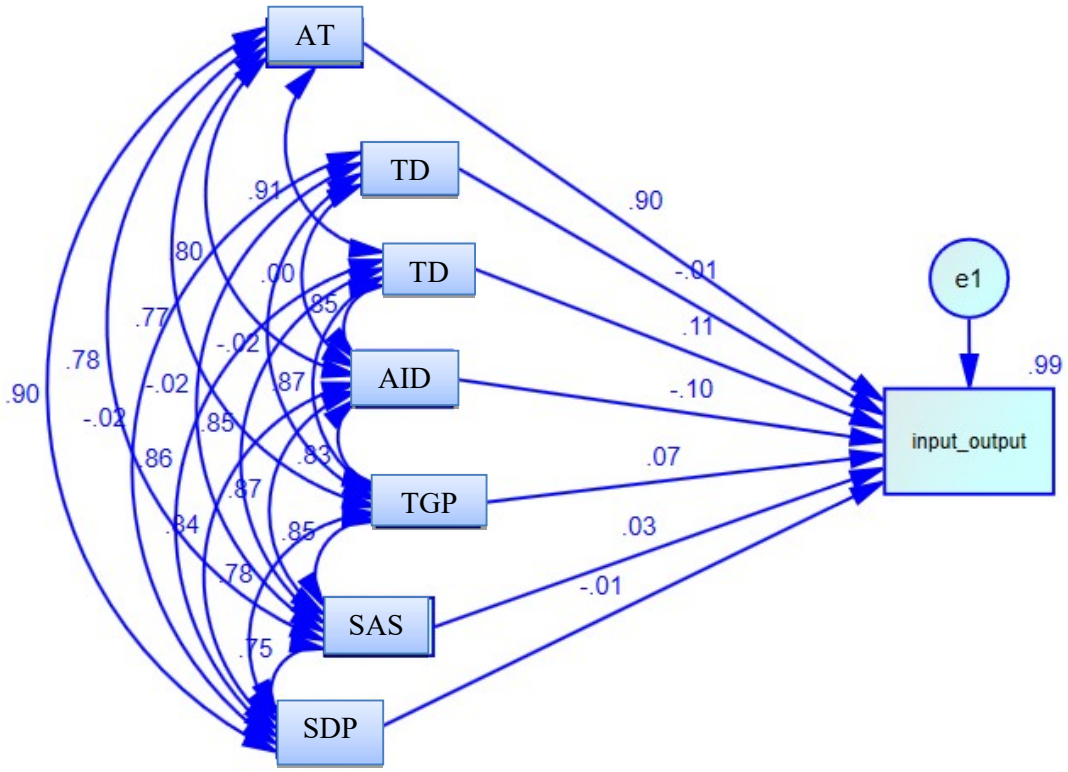

Figure 1 Model fit, research model: source own survey, 2023

Path Analysis

Path analysis is an extension of multiple regression that allows us to examine more complicated relations among the variables than having several, independent variables predict one dependent variables and to compare different models against one another to see which one best fits the data (Psychiatry, 2005). Path analysis is based on a closed system of nested relationships among variables that are represented statistically by a series of structured multiple regression equations (Colombia public health, 2022). Wright (1934, as cited in Valenzuela, & Bachmann, 2017) describe path analysis as a system of correlation coefficients, path analysis is now regarded as one type of the more general statistical technique known as structural equation modeling (SEM). The difference is that path analysis is restricted to observed variables, whereas SEM can handle latent variables as well. Path analysis does not take into consideration error in the measurement of variables.

Interpretation of Beta Value

Since the SEM employed for standardized regression on path analysis, the beta coefficient of each independent variable on the dependent variable is not constant and it depends on the value of the independent variables. Thus, the coefficient can be a means for summarizing how a change in response is related to a change in a covariate. For continuous variables, the coefficients of discrete changes are continuous, for continuous independent variables, the coefficient indicates when the unit change in the independent variable leads to an increase in the probability of tourist satisfaction in this study.

The value of β is used to show which independent variable is the most predictor of the dependent variable. According to Zikmund et al., (2010) the advantage of β is to provide a constant scale, and that the βs are comparable, that the greater the value of standardized regression coefficient the more the independent variable explains the dependent variable. A standard coefficient beta was used to determine the strong predictor of tourist satisfaction from independent variables. The standardized beta coefficients give a measure of the contribution of each variable to the model. A large value indicates that a unit change in this predictor variable has a large effect on the dependent variable. In the following section, the regression result of each explanatory variable is individually discussed to test the hypotheses of the study and reach conclusion in the general model.

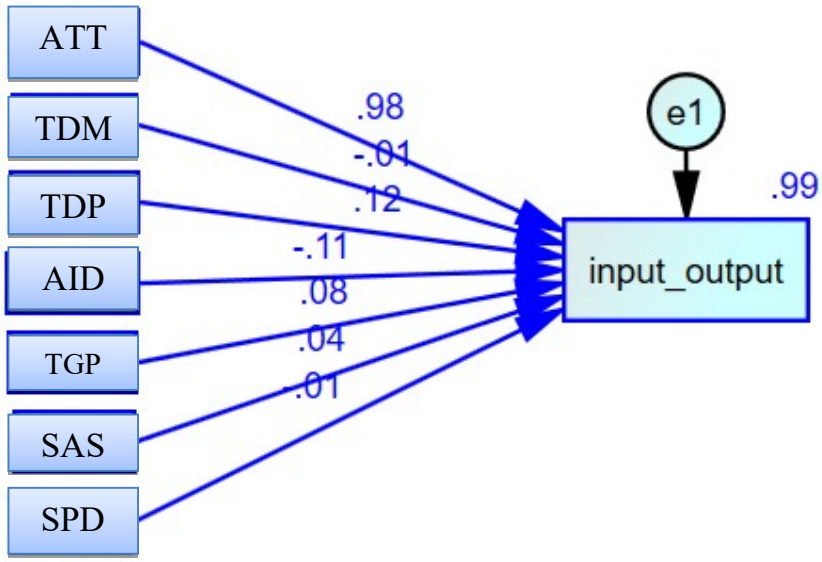

Figure 2. Path analysis, hypothesis testing model, Source: own survey, 2023

4.4.7 R^2 values (squared multiple correlation)

In structural equation model, R^2 is known as squared multiple correlations (SMC) which indicates the variance level reflected by predictors of the factors in question. Having minimum value of 0.409 and maximum value 0.8 in SMC analysis it can be taken as general predictors explain respective variable (Byrne, 2010). Therefore, on this study the exogenous variables outstandingly explain the endogenous variable as shown on table 4.8.

Table 3. R^2 Value

Endogenous variables	R^2 (SMC) Value
Destination competitiveness	.82

Source: own survey 2023

Hypothesis Testing

Hypothesis testing is used to address the study's objectives and to assess the relationships between structural models. Table 4.9 illustrates the analysis of the data hypotheses using the value of the standardized regression weight, which indicates the coefficient of effect between variables.

According to the results from the regression paths of the hypothesis development shown in Table 4.9, Hypothesis 1: Tourist attraction have positive and significant effect on destination competitiveness, which is rejected thus, the null hypothesis is accepted (t= -7.598, β = -.101, p=<001). Hypothesis 2 destination management have positive and significant influence destination competitiveness, which is rejected thus, the null hypothesis is accepted (t=-1.91., β = -.010, p= 05). Hypothesis 3: price directly and positively influences destination competitiveness, which is accepted, thus, the null hypothesis is rejected (t=-6.666, β =.112, p= <001). Hypothesis 4: Accessibility and Infrastructure significantly and positively effect, which is accepted, thus, the null hypothesis is rejected (t= 58.781, β = 0.901, p= < 001).

Hypothesis 5: Tour guide performance significantly and positively influence destination competiveness Tour guide performance have negative and significant influence on destination competitiveness, which is accepted thus, the null hypothesis is rejected (t= 5.929, β = .071, p= <001).). Hypothesis 6: Safety and security significantly and positively influence destination competitiveness, which is accepted thus, the null hypothesis is rejected (t= 2.684, β = .033, p= <007). Hypothesis 7: sustainability practice significantly and positively affect destination competitiveness , which is rejected thus, the null hypothesis is accepted (t= -.784, β = -.011, p= <433).

Table 4. path coefficients and hypothesis testing

Hypothesis	Path/Effect	β - value	Standard error	t-value	P	Results
H1	ATT ----> Destination competitiveness	-.101	.012	-7.598	***	Rejected
H2	TDM ----> Destination competitiveness	.901	.016	58.781	***	Accepted
H3	TDP ----> Destination competitiveness	-.010	.008	-1.913	.05	Rejected
H4	AID ----> Destination competitiveness	.112	.026	6.666	***	Accepted
H5	TGP ----> Destination competitiveness	.071	.018	5.929	***	Accepted
H6	SAS----> Destination competitiveness	.033	.021	2.684	.007	Accepted
H7	SDP----> Destination competitiveness	-.011	.015	-.784	.433	Rejected

Source: own survey, 2023

**** Significant at p < 0.001; **Significant at p < 0.01, * Significant at p < 0.05*

***NB**: ATT (Tourist attraction), TDM (tourist destination management), TDP (Tourist destination price), AID (Accessibility and infrastructure), TGP(tour guide performance) SAS (safety and security), SPD(Sustainability practice).*

Conclusion

This study aims to explore the factors influencing destination competitiveness in Bale and East Bale Zones. The hypotheses generated suggest that various elements—such as tourist attractions, destination management, pricing, accessibility and infrastructure, tour guides' performance, safety and security, and sustainability practices—play crucial roles in shaping the overall competitiveness of these regions as tourist destinations.

The positive relationships posited in the hypotheses indicate that enhancing each of these factors could lead to increased attractiveness and competitiveness of Bale and East Bale Zones. Given the unique cultural heritage and natural beauty of these areas, there is significant potential for growth in the tourism sector if these factors are effectively addressed.

Recommendation

Based on the findings, the conclusions drawn, the following recommendations are suggested;

- Enhance Tourist Attractions: Invest in the development and promotion of local attractions. This could include improving facilities at natural sites, promoting cultural events, and enhancing visitor experiences through guided tours.
- . Strengthen Destination Management: Establish a cohesive management strategy that involves local stakeholders, including government agencies, businesses, and community groups. Effective destination management can streamline operations and improve service quality.
- Competitive Pricing Strategies: Conduct market research to understand tourists' price sensitivity. Offering competitive pricing for services and accommodations can attract a broader range of visitors.
- Improve Accessibility and Infrastructure: Invest in transportation networks (roads, public transport) and accommodation facilities to ensure easy access to attractions. This includes maintaining

existing infrastructure and developing new facilities where necessary.

- Train Tour Guides: Implement training programs for tour guides to enhance their knowledge and performance. Well-informed guides can significantly enrich the tourist experience and promote positive word-of-mouth.

- Enhance Safety and Security Measures: Collaborate with local law enforcement to improve safety protocols in tourist areas. Promoting a safe environment is crucial for attracting visitors.

- Promote Sustainable Practices: Encourage sustainable tourism practices among local businesses and communities. This could involve promoting eco-friendly accommodations, waste management programs, and conservation initiatives.

- Regular Monitoring and Evaluation: Establish metrics to regularly assess the effectiveness of implemented strategies. Continuous evaluation can help identify areas for improvement and ensure that efforts align with evolving tourist expectations.

By focusing on these recommendations, Bale and East Bale Zones can enhance their competitiveness as tourist destinations, attracting more visitors while ensuring sustainable development for the local community.

References:

Abreu-Novais, M., Ruhanen, L. and Arcodia, C. (2015), "Destination competitiveness: what we know, what we know but shouldn't and what we don't know but should", Current Issues in Tourism, Vol. 19 No. 6, pp. 492-512, doi: 10.1080/13683500.2015.1091443.

Azzopardi, E. (2011), "The international competitiveness of Malta as a tourist destination", Doctoral dissertation, Robert Gordon University, Aberdeen, available at: http://hdl.handle.net/10059/660.

Berdo, S. (2016), "The complexity of tourist destination competitiveness concept through main competitiveness models", International Journal of Scientific and Engineering Research, Vol. 7 No. 3, pp. 1011-1015.

Bramwell, B., & Lane, B. (2011). Critical research themes in tourism: Tourism collaboration. *Routledge*.

Buckley, R. (2012). Sustainable tourism: Research and reality. *Annals of Tourism Research*, 39(2), 528-546.

Chon, K.S. and Mayer, K.J. (1995), "Destination competitiveness models in tourism and their application to Las Vegas", Journal of Tourism Systems and Quality Management, Vol. 1 Nos 2/3/4, pp. 227-246.

Crotti, R. and Misrahi, T. (2017), The travel and tourism competitiveness report 2017: paving the way for a more sustainable future. Geneva, Switzerland: World Economic Forum

Crouch, G.I. and Ritchie, J.B. (1999), "Tourism, competitiveness, and societal prosperity", Journal of Business Research, Vol. 44 No. 3, pp. 137-152, doi: 10.1016/S0148-2963(97)00196-3

Dimoska, T. and Trimcev, B. (2012), "Competitiveness strategies for supporting economic development of the touristic destination", Procedia – Social and Behavioral Sciences, Vol. 44, pp. 279-288, doi: 10.1016/j.sbspro.2012.05.031

Dupeyras, A. and MacCallum, N. (2013), Indicators for Measuring Competitiveness in Tourism: A Guidance Document, OECD Tourism Papers Publishing, doi: 10.1787/5k47t9q2t923-en.

Dwyer, L. and Kim, C. (2003), "Destination competitiveness: determinants and indicators", Current Issues in Tourism, Vol. 6 No. 5, pp. 369-414, doi: 10.1080/13683500308667962.

Dwyer, L., & Kim, C. (2003). Destination competitiveness: Determinants and indicators. *Current Issues in Tourism*, 6(5), 369-414.

Enright, M.J. and Newton, J. (2004), "Tourism destination competitiveness: a quantitative approach", Tourism Management, Vol. 25 No. 6, pp. 777-788, doi: 10.1016/j.tourman.2004.06.008.

Goffi, G. (2013), "A model of tourism destination competitiveness: the case of the Italian destinations of excellence", Anuario Turismo y Sociedad, Vol. 14, pp. 121-147.

Gooroochurn, N. and Sugiyarto, G. (2005), "Competitiveness indicators in the travel and tourism industry", Tourism Economics, Vol. 11 No. 1, pp. 25-43, doi: 10.5367/00000000532 97130.

Hanafiah, M.H. and Zulkifly, M.I. (2019), "Tourism destination competitiveness and tourism performance: a secondary data approach", Competitiveness Review: An International Business Journal, Vol. 29 No. 5, pp. 592-621, doi: 10.1108/CR-07-2018-0045.

Hanafiah, M.H., Hemdi, M.A. and Ahmad, I. (2015), "Reflections on tourism destination competitiveness (TDC) determinants", Advanced Science Letters, Vol. 21 No. 5, pp. 1571-1574, doi: 10.1166/ asl.2015.6104.

Ritchie, J.B. and Crouch, G.I. (1993), Competitiveness in International Tourism: A Framework for Understanding and Analysis, World Tourism Education and Research Centre, University of Calgary.

Snowdon, B. and Stonehouse, G. (2006), "Competitiveness in a globalized world: Michael Porter on the microeconomic foundations of the competitiveness of nations, regions, and firms", Journal of International Business Studies, Vol. 37 No. 2, pp. 163-175, doi: 10.1057/palgrave. jibs.8400190

UNWTO (2021). Tourism for Development: Volume I. United Nations World Tourism Organization.